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Representative
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

January 23, 2017

Dear

As looming budget cuts threaten to undermine the good work our nonprofits do providing quality services to the people who need them most, including my son who suffers from a severe mental illness, I hope you'll consider fiscally responsible actions that will insure that those in need are provided for.

Compassionate Care
for the Mentally Ill and
Persons with Physical and Developmental Disabilities
Is Fiscally Responsible and Morally Right

Let's find creative solutions to restore funding to nonprofits!

Nonprofits can provide quality services at lower costs than when the state provides them.

Don't dismantle much needed services to the most vulnerable.

Nonprofits are stretched thin and cannot absorb more state and federal budget cuts

I want to continue to enjoy moments like this one with my son. Please support Mental Health Services



I know all too well how difficult it is to obtain mental health services for an adult child. My son has been struggling with a mental illness since its onset, during his freshman year at college, nearly fourteen years ago. His illness has both the symptoms of schizophrenia and a mood disorder that includes periods of depression and manic behaviors. There have been numerous hospitalizations and struggles to access the care he needed.

Statewide, gains have been made in the early intervention and provision of mental health care for children under the age of 18 unfortunately, little is being done for young adults. The prevailing thought is that

those young adults will seek out treatment if their symptoms are bad enough to interfere with their daily lives. This is woefully misguided thinking as the onset of serious and chronic mental illnesses such as schizophrenia occur most often between the ages of 18 - 25.

Most persons, in the early stages of severe mental illness, lack insight into their illness and the ability to navigate the bureaucracy of a complicated, underfunded and overburdened mental health care system.

The subsequent costs to the state, both in economic and human terms, of reducing funding to DMHAS and DDS are enormous and will far offset any potential savings today. It makes no economic sense. Furthermore, such a reduction of funding to DMHAS is counter to recommendations made in the Sandy Hook Commission Report as it relates to Mental Health Issues.

Are you aware that 2/3 of all adults and 1/2 of children with a diagnosable mental disorder receive no mental health services? In 1955, there was 1 psychiatric bed for each 300 Americans in our hospitals; today there is only 1 for every 3,000. One outrageous consequence of the dearth of mental services is that currently there are more people in our prisons (upward of 16%) with serious mental illness than are in state mental hospitals or fully staffed supported housing programs.¹

This is costing us untold, millions of dollars every year and the human costs are incalculable. If nonprofits are not funded they will cease to provide services. I fear that many more people will be on the streets and in our state prison system.

My son is one of the lucky ones in that he is currently receiving services through Gilead Community Services, a nonprofit, mental healthcare agency in Middletown. Jeremy was transferred from CVH to Gilead's care three years ago. Currently, he is in a group home and soon he'll transition into independent living with daily support from his treatment team. While he still struggles to manage his illness, Jeremy feels as though he is part of a community; he is respected for who he is as opposed to being identified by his diagnosis. The administrative team and each of the Gilead caregivers that I've had the pleasure of working with are committed to their mission of compassionately providing quality mental health care, in concert with the community, in an effort to help each client reach their full potential.

Gilead serves 650 individuals living with mental issues in the Middlesex area. In 2011-2012, Gilead Community Services transferred 13 clients from long-term, in-patient settings to fully staffed supported programs. In doing so, Gilead created 40 new jobs and saved the state an estimated \$3,500,000. There are other nonprofit mental health agencies, such as Gilead, that are providing much needed services to many. Please maintain what is working and encourage new initiatives to support recovery in individuals who are currently without care or hope.

¹ *More Mentally Ill Persons Are in Jails and Prisons Than Hospitals: A Survey of the States*
by E. Fuller Torrey, M.D. Executive Director, Stanley Medical Research Institute, and Board Member,
Treatment Advocacy Center

"The measure of a society is found in how they treat their weakest and most helpless citizens."

James Earl "Jimmy" Carter Jr.

Please, do not reduce funding to the nonprofits that provide
desperately needed services to people with disabilities.

Compassionate Care Is Fiscally Responsible and Morally Right

Thank you for your time.

I am a long time resident and taxpayer in the State of Connecticut. My involvement as an educator in the Connecticut Public Schools is ongoing. I also serve on the board of Gilead Community Services in Middletown. Gilead recently partnered with Oak Hill, the state's largest provider for persons with physical and developmental disabilities. Our strategic planning is considering ways our partnership can more efficiently provide access to care. We'd welcome your visit to our program to witness firsthand what we do and discuss our ideas for the future.

Visit our website to learn more:

<http://gileadcs.org/who-we-are/>

Sincerely,

Suzanne Wind Gaskell

I know I'm not in your district but this issue affects all residents in the state of Connecticut.

Approximately 1 in 5 adults in the U.S.—43.8 million, or 18.5%—experiences mental illness in a given year. Approximately 1 in 25 adults in the U.S.—10 million, or 4.2%—experiences a serious mental illness in a given year that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities.

National Alliance for Mental Illness